The Black Cat

JULY 1907

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Bradley Gilman

The Trick that Turned
Don Mark Lemon

The New Shikari
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Toad
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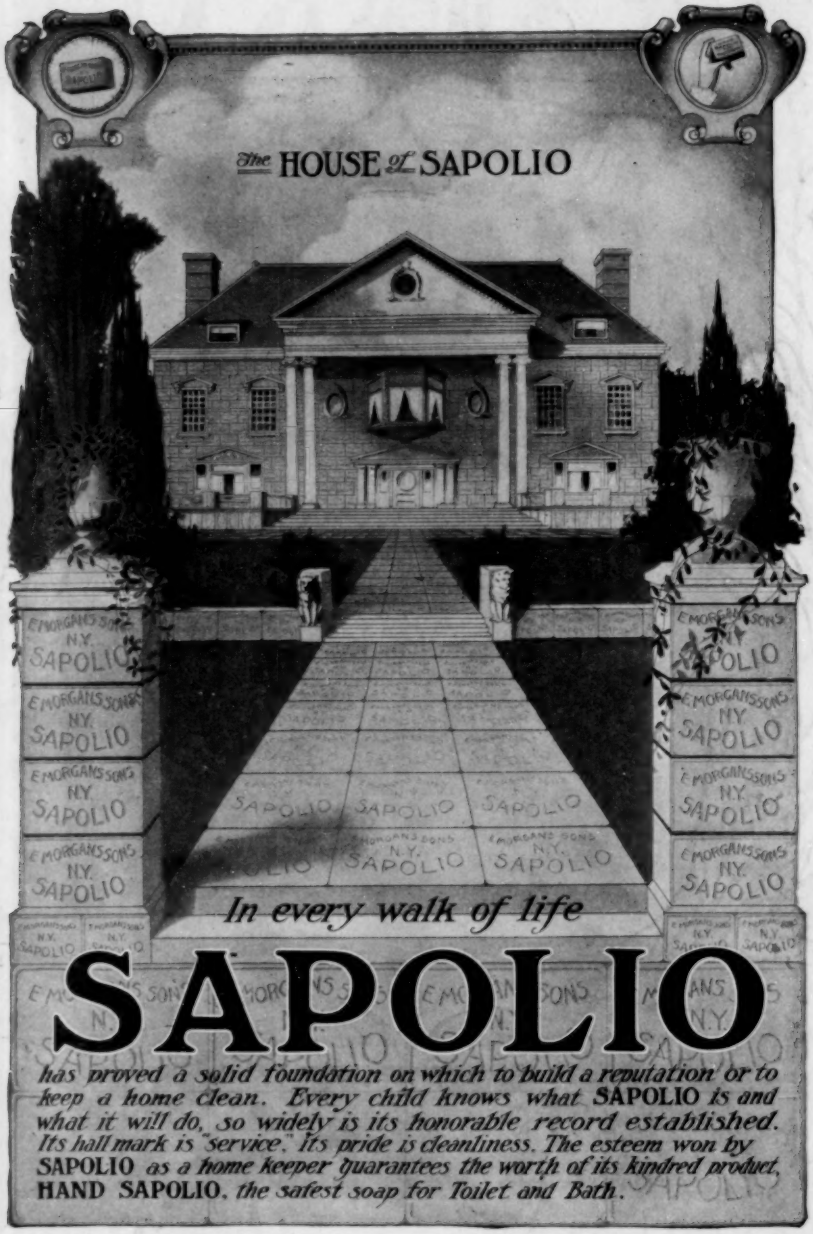
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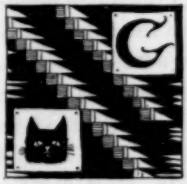
The Tomb of Ptah Hotaph the Great.*

BY BRADLEY GILMAN.



GENERAL SIR HUGH KENYON and Lady Harriet Kenyon sat idly upon the terrace at "Shepherd's," Cairo. They were a part of that human drift-material which the social tides and currents collect at the great centres of European and Eastern travel. Sir Hugh was stout, grizzled and brusque in manner; Lady Harriet was pale, apologetic,— an obedient satellite of the greater luminary.

Sir Hugh was British, in face, voice and manner; he assumed that the world was guilty until it proved itself innocent; he was reserved toward chance acquaintances of his own nation, but was approachable by others, especially Americans; indeed, the third member of their party — at the moment absent — was Miriam Lindley, an American, the daughter of a former member of the American Legation at Brussels; she was a continuous source of amusement to Sir Hugh, and of anxiety to his care-taking wife; whether Lady Harriet was most concerned for the cruelly-treated Egyptian donkeys, or the neglected, eye-inflamed Egyptian children, or the incalculable activities of her young American charge, she could not have decided. "I wonder where that dear child is

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now?" she exclaimed, in what her friends called a "plaintive tone," and her enemies — the few she had — "a whine."

"Oh, don't worry about that girl!" responded Sir Hugh, frowning, and clattering his crutches. He always played those crutches for more than their real value; his conspicuous lameness had come from rheumatism and not from wounds; but, taken with his military title and medals, the sticks gained him many privileges and some deference. "She is probably with the Count or with that old playmate of hers — er — what is his name? Yes, Leavenworth. That's it. Anyway, she's quite competent to take care of herself and of an 'awkward squad' of dangling young men, also."

Lady Harriet again took up her burden of guardianship: "Since you mention the Count, my dear, I admit that I feel easier; the very thought of his manly presence inspires a sense of security."

Sir Hugh could hardly be expected to echo the enthusiasm of his wife for another man. "The fellow has pluck," he remarked, idly smoothing the "Egyptian Gazette," which lay across his lap. "Not that his jumping into the water at Alexandria proves much; he simply had to do it; some boatman would have done it, if he hadn't. What a reckless creature she is, though! I had warned her, before she left the deck, not to step in to that egg-shell of a boat, without aid."

The military frown returned, at this recollection of insubordination; but it disappeared quickly, as his wife asked, "Do you think, Sir Hugh, that she would be unduly influenced — I mean — do you think that she would consider his act — a — a — leading — er — of Providence?"

Whether the good woman's thought arose from her perennial romanticism or from her devout low-church mental diathesis would be difficult to say, but her pragmatic husband nipped one or both buds by his prompt reply: "Nonsense, Harriet! The girl is no fool; although," he added, with an amused turn, "she does act like one, sometimes."

A few moments of silence between the two followed, as both gazed at a showman, with a spiritless dog and a vivacious monkey, who was attracting some attention from the terrace tourists. Then

Lady Kenyon resumed cautiously, "I think that Miriam likes the Count Maranville, don't you, Sir Hugh?"

"Hm! Perhaps," was the abrupt reply. "He's clever and accomplished, and all that; but I don't — I don't ——"

"Don't what, my dear?"

"Well, I don't quite — quite trust him. I don't see what he's here for."

"Why, my dear," explained Lady Kenyon, laying her hand on his arm, "He's connected with the Belgian Embassy; a secretary, I believe; and he is deeply interested in Archæology, also; quite an authority, I'm told."

"Who told you?" asked Sir Hugh, with significant brevity.

"Oh — well, I can't say exactly who; but — but he certainly knows all about Egyptian antiquities."

Sir Hugh laughed in open scorn. "Nobody knows all about that subject," he retorted. "Least of all this Count, who divides all his time between lounging at the Khedivial Club and playing polo at the Ghesireh Palace."

"Oh, no, Hugh, dear! not all his time," responded Lady Harriet, weakly defensive.

"Well, no! Not all his time," assented her husband, somewhat boisterously, "I take that back. He gives a good part of it to Miriam. Probably he's with her somewhere, now."

"No, he is not, Sir Hugh," corrected a tall, graceful girl in "the early twenties," as she came up to the two, her dark, flashing eyes making whiter her broad forehead and brightening the gold of her luxuriant brown hair.

The penetrating quality in Miriam Lindley's large, dark eyes was not merely a physical characteristic; those remarkable eyes were the uniquely trained aids of the beautiful girl's keen mind; for, — as few chance acquaintances suspected, and not all of even her friends knew, — Miriam was absolutely deaf, had been so from birth; had learned to read the speech of others by their lips, and had been taught to utter her own thought by the trained muscles of her throat.

Turning to Lady Kenyon, she continued, playfully, "When will you two learn to guard yourself against my 'second sight.' I saw, from the end of the terrace, exactly what you were saying."

Her voice lacked a little in modulation, but was charming in its clearness and its perfect articulation. She dropped into a huge bamboo chair beside them and continued, with a whimsical toss of her well-poised head, "I warn you not to say anything against the Count Maranville, whom I have just left, at the gate of the Ezbakiah Garden; he is a delightful man; he has such cleverness and tact; and even you, Sir Hugh, concede his courage."

The grizzled, childless old General was regarding her with an amused smile; he often encouraged her piquant audacity, although he recognized its dangers. "I like courage in a man," he replied, sententiously; and he added, as an afterthought, "But I don't like to — er — to see a woman — er — too ——"

Miriam filled out his sentence without hesitation. "But you don't like all courageous people, is that it?"

"Well, now that you have said it, I won't contradict you," laughed Sir Hugh, "and you may make your own applications. But, speaking of the devil, here comes ——"

His loud tone rapidly subsided, and died out, as he shuffled his crutches and made ready to greet Count Maranville, who now sprang lightly up the terrace-steps, taking two at a time.

The new-comer was a dark, well-groomed man of medium height and with keen black eyes; when he removed his hat in a graceful salute, a slight baldness added ten years to his uncertain age; his voice, as he first greeted Lady Kenyon and presented to her a bunch of roses, was pleasing and had an attractive foreign accent. "Just a few blossoms," he remarked depreciatingly, — although his grand air in presenting them was in quite another key, — I pulled them off our wall, where they grow abundantly."

His movements were easy and assured; perhaps a trifle too assured; his tongue was well-trained — either to act or remain silent; his eyes were alert, and were either frank or defiant — one could hardly say which; and they scouted restlessly, under their mobile eyebrows, while the head was held almost stiffly.

The Count seemed about to shake hands with Miriam — although they had parted only a few minutes before — but she suddenly developed an absorbing interest in the roses, leaned over Lady Kenyon, and caressed the delicate leaves with white hands that were wonderfully pliant."

"I wanted to ask you about these scarabs," remarked Sir Hugh, after shaking hands with the Count. "You, of course, know more about such things than I do. I bought them yesterday in a Mouski bazaar. I dare say that they are not the real thing, though."

His words implied distrust, but his eager manner indicated interest and even confidence in his purchases. The Count took them, and seemed to examine them with the greatest care. "Good work, these," he remarked, with animation. "Those old fellows had a rare touch, even in the simplest arts."

The blunt British veteran held him to the point at issue. "Yes, but are they the real thing? That is the question."

"Why — yes — yes," came the Count's reply, and it crescendoed rapidly from hesitation to certainty, ending in entire conviction. "Yes, they are — they are genuine — er — they are indeed very old, genuine antiques."

His eyes instinctively avoided the General's exacting gaze and rested upon Lady Kenyon and Miriam Lindley. The older woman rewarded him promptly, in her fluttering "plaintive" voice, "Oh, how good of you, Count, to give such a favorable judgment. It is so hard to know the false from the true, in this country."

"In any country, as well," interpolated Miss Lindley, crisply, looking as if she had not spoken.

"Quite so, in any country," continued Lady Kenyon, echoing. "And how fortunate we are to have a specialist, an authority like the Count, who can ——"

"Oh, there you are! Good morning to you!" It was Miss Lindley's voice, interrupting. She was speaking in badinage, to a tall, unkempt young man, who drew near. He was deliberate in his movements, serious and pre-occupied in countenance, but — as always — frank and fearless in expression, when confronted by a person or a fact.

"Come, Gerald," continued Miss Lindley, taking him by the arm, like a recreant school-boy, "Come and make your peace with Lady Kenyon! It was her birthday yesterday, and you neither called upon her nor sent her even a rose." Then she added, mischievously, with a glance at the Count, "And roses so abundant and inexpensive, too!"

Young Leavenworth yielded passively to the girl's constraining hand, greeted the various members of the group, and then, with an ingenuous smile, exclaimed, "My dear Lady Kenyon, I — I — have no decent excuse to offer. I — I — just forgot about it; that is the whole truth."

His words and attitude were half humorous, yet with a vein of honest and almost uncouth regret in them, which piqued the vivacious girl to rally him further. "Oh, you merely feign contrition, you dweller in tombs; we know well that no chronological period under a thousand years interests you. Found any cheerful mummies recently, Gerald?"

"No, I haven't, Miriam," responded the young man, with a sudden access of seriousness, "But I have made — at least I think I have made, a very important 'find' — a mastaba — I — but there! I mustn't say anything about it, yet." And he broke off, in his honest, self-absorbed way, leaving the others in various degrees of surprise and curiosity.

Miriam tossed her handsome head and retorted, "Sir, you are a clear case of *lucus a non lucendo*. If you could not say anything, why, pray, did you say anything?"

There was great freedom in her manner toward him, yet the freedom of a well-bred young girl, restricted solely by "inner standards." She spoke with an utter absence of self-consciousness, and Gerald, on his side, looked plainly annoyed, for an instant, then nervously fingered the long measuring-pole which he carried, and seemed half-inclined to revise his broken speech; but Miriam's brown eyes danced, and she broke into a derisive laugh, which quite disconcerted him; he suddenly realized — dreamy fellow that he was — that again, as so often before, her nimble wit was amusing itself at his expense. So he smiled, shook a warning finger at her, and relapsed into silence.

The Count, meanwhile, had been standing erect, with a rigid courtesy, bestowing a continuous, conventional smile on one and another of the group. The General, unaffectedly amused, as always, by the spirited girl's raillery, now drew Gerald's attention to his purchased scarabs. "A few that I picked up near the tombs of the Khaliphs," he remarked, with affected carelessness.

The young archæologist glanced at them and remarked, "Very

good! They make such excellent souvenirs, I think; so portable. Vastly better than the dozen mummied cats which one of my countrymen shipped, last week."

The casual, uncritical way in which he spoke nettled the purchaser of the scarabs; he rolled uneasily in his broad bamboo chair and remarked, "The real thing, aren't they?"

The young man's face changed at once. He looked more searchingly at one or two of the little elliptical stone figures, and replied, ingenuously: "Of course, they are not genuine antiques; but they will serve ——"

"Hm, the Count, here, said they were," interposed Sir Hugh, sitting stiffly erect and speaking very impersonally, but with an ominous frown on his rugged face.

There was an awkward silence. Count Maranville pulled at his thin moustache, and his features took on a secretive, feline expression. Miriam Lindley's intelligent eyes, — doing double duty for seeing and hearing, — glanced keenly from one to another of her friends' faces. Lady Kenyon coughed nervously.

Gerald was the first to speak, simply, frankly, perhaps too didactically; he spoke like one who had been trained to respect facts, and seek truth, and expected others to welcome any sound information.

"So good an Egyptologist as Count Maranville probably did not look closely at its markings. If he ——"

"I will spare Mr. Leavenworth the trouble of giving us a lesson in archæology," interrupted the Count, in a tone of ill-concealed defiance. "I shall be happy to meet him at his pleasure, in the Ghiseh Museum, and there discuss ——"

At this moment, opportunely, or inopportunely, a flutter and outcry arose from the throng on the sidewalk, gathered about a showman. One of his sluggish cobras suddenly had brightened up and darted among the spectators, who scattered, with wild cries.

A few moments only were needed for the wiry Arab to capture his hissing, protesting property, and peace was quickly restored.

Count Maranville seized the occasion to take leave of his friends, shaking hands with all except young Leavenworth, bowing profoundly over Lady Kenyon's hand, and raising his hat with much grace as he departed.

A quarter of an hour later he was talking excitedly in a bazaar of the Mouski, with a clever Arab, who had sometimes been employed by Leavenworth in his excavations.

. . . . . .

Two days later, Sir Hugh and Lady Kenyon joined a large company of tourists who visited the Pyramid of Sahkarah and its neighboring tombs, twenty miles up the river. Late in the forenoon, having left the train at the mud-hut village of Bedrascheen, they were toiling across the sands of the desert. Sir Hugh, in his pose of disabled veteran, sat comfortably in a broad-tired sand-cart. Lady Kenyon and twoscore others, clinging to diminutive donkeys, brokenly besought their donkey-boys to cease their goading of the over-burdened beasts.

Gerald Leavenworth had expected to join them at Bedrascheen, or at Mariette's House in the desert, near which he was excavating, but he had not appeared; Miriam was plainly vexed at his non-appearance, and, when Count Maranville suggested that she allow him to pilot her, by a slight detour, through the picturesque Sokh or open market of Bedrascheen, she promptly agreed.

The main body of tourists, with guides, donkey-boys and baggage animals, reached Mariette's House shortly before noon, the usual rendezvous of Sakharah excursionists, at lunch-time. The several guides poured forth to their respective parties their usual description of the house, its surroundings, and its history. "See House Mariette live! He die long time; he great man; Oh, ver' great man." And so on, the tourists, — in various degrees of laceration and exhaustion, — sinking upon the broad, covered terrace, and giving patient, persistent, but not over enthusiastic attention.

"I wonder where Miriam can be," began Lady Kenyon, as soon as she recovered strength and speech. "I hope nothing has happened to her; the Count is certainly a very brave man; they do say that Bedrascheen market is a wild place." She alternated her plaintive ejaculations with sundry dabs of a dampened handkerchief upon her heated face.

"Oh, don't borrow trouble about her, Harriet!" was the General's gruff response. "She's safe enough." And he helped himself to a mixture from two bottles, as he spoke.

Hardly had he finished his remark when Miriam Lindley rapidly ascended the uneven stone steps of the terrace and came over to them. Only a glance from the General and his wife, — and they were aroused by their ward's quick, nervous stride, her flashing eyes, and her quivering nostrils.

Lady Harriet spoke sympathetically, anxiously, "What has disturbed you, Miriam, dear? You seem greatly excited." And she put out both hands impulsively.

The beautiful, brilliant girl seemed inclined to avoid their inquiring eyes, and to withhold, at least for the moment, an explanation; but her habit of close scrutiny, in conversation, held her, and she glanced keenly at each of her friends, in turn, yet with compressed lips and troubled or angry brow. Then, feeling the demands of the situation, she said, with a characteristic toss of her head backward, yet with evident self-restraint. "We had a rather lively time over at the Sokh."

The General's mouth closed tightly, but he said nothing. Lady Harriet, however, exclaimed, under her breath, "Oh, Miriam, Oh, Miriam, dear!" and clasped the girl's arm, in a feverish, futile fashion.

"There, there!" responded the sympathetic girl, gently stroking Lady Harriet's thin, white hand. "Don't be alarmed! It's all over now, and I'm not a bit the worse for it. You see, that dreadful Sokh was full of the wildest-looking savages I ever saw; and our donkey-boy got into some wrangle with a surly Bedawee; whereupon, the Count threatened the Arab, which led to an outcry and a general movement toward us. Those half-naked, furious fellows certainly did look dangerous ——"

Miriam was athletic and self-reliant, but sensitive, in the extreme; and the memory of the savage mob made her shudder; but in a moment she went on, "Luckily the Count had a revolver with him, and when he told me that, I felt a little easier."

"Hm," interjected the veteran, "I can affirm that he did not display it."

Miriam looked at him with surprise. "How do you know that?" she asked, simply.

"For the reason, my dear, that if he had, you would not be here now. Those savage fellows would have butchered both of you;

they would have taken that display of a weapon as an excuse for violence. The Count would fight well, I fancy, but the end would have been certain."

Miriam regarded him fixedly for several moments; his suggestion was a surprise and added horror to her. Then she cut short her narration. "The upshot of it was that after a bit, they quieted down, and — and here I am."

As she finished, a calmer look settled upon her mobile face, but only to be succeeded by a fixed look of stern and even anxious inquiry; her alert eyes rested upon her friends' faces, and again held a far-away look into space.

After a minute's silence, Sir Hugh, watching her, and now more aroused than he liked to show, asked, "Where is the Count?"

Miriam returned his searching gaze, equably, yet remotely, during several seconds. "I will tell you, Sir Hugh, exactly what is troubling me; perhaps that fright at the Sokh unnerved me; but — but ——"

"Yes, yes, dear child," interrupted Lady Kenyon, breathlessly, "Speak freely to us!"

"I may be over-distrustful," resumed Miriam, "but after we had left the Sokh far behind, on our way over here, the Count became very uneasy; there could have been no danger, for we were on the main route from the railway station, and parties of tourists were all about us. But he presently excused himself, and left me to come on with the donkey-boy, saying, — rather mechanically, I thought, — that he had forgotten an important engagement in Cairo. But — when I glanced back, a few minutes later, from the crest of a sand-dune, I saw him talking excitedly with that evil-looking Arab guide of Gerald Leavenworth's."

She paused, catching her breath, and her excitement seemed to increase. The General at once grasped her idea. "You are worrying yourself needlessly about Leavenworth," he remarked, reassuringly. "Take my word for it, that sturdy fellow is amply able ——"

Miriam interrupted him; her hands, now withdrawn from Lady Kenyon, gripped each other tightly; she leaned forward, and her brilliant brown eyes were fixed upon Sir Hugh. "I have not told you all," she said. "When I saw those two together I had a — a

premonition, shall I say? A suspicion rather, of impending evil; and I quickly unslung my field-glass and focused it on them."

"Yes — yes?" interpolated the General, encouragingly, more moved by her manner than by her report thus far given, yet still affecting indifference.

"I brought them very near, with my glass," continued Miriam, now speaking rapidly. "I could see their faces and their lips, as they talked. I could also read many, — though not all their words, and — and they were talking about Gerald, and about some important 'find' near here; yes, and in a violent, savage way, too, which alarmed me quite as much as did their actual words."

Sir Hugh did not care to longer disguise his anxiety. "You mean — well, what do you mean?" he asked, blankly.

"This," rejoined the excited girl. "That in some way those men and Gerald," — she choked a bit as she spoke her old playmate's name, — "and some important archæological discovery are all bound up together; just how I have little idea. I know that Gerald has been excavating somewhere in this region; I think, also, that he has made, — or is making, — an important 'find.' I know also that Count Maranville is extremely ambitious to gain a name for himself in Egyptology. There! That is all. But stop! One more thing; I watched the Count and that villainous-looking guide, until they finished; and they both moved off — not toward the railway station, but in a more easterly direction, the guide rapidly leading."

She ended, but kept her anxious gaze fixed upon Sir Hugh's non-committal face. Presently, after meeting and avoiding her eyes several times, he remarked, "I have my own opinion about that Count; he is capable of — well, of anything that would advance his own interests."

Lady Kenyon said nothing; she plainly felt that the situation had become too serious for her powers. She tried to take Miriam's hand; but the girl was restless, and fingered nervously the field-glass slung at her side. Both the women unconsciously and tacitly turned, — as women will, in such an emergency, — toward the physically stronger sex. Sir Hugh's knitted brow showed that he was deliberating deeply.

Suddenly Miriam, as if obeying a restless impulse, sprang up

and levelled her field-glass across the desert, sweeping the sand-dunes. The next instant she uttered a low cry. "I knew I saw something!" she exclaimed, and put the glass into the General's hand.

Sir Hugh took it, looked, then muttered something like a military oath and arose to his feet, — the crutches, now forgotten, falling with a clatter upon the stone terrace. Another long look and he broke out, with that impulsiveness natural to him, though thus far restrained, "I certainly did see a white cloth on a stick, out there; and the stick seemed to be marked off with white bands, like — like Leavenworth's measuring-pole; and now — now I can't see either the pole or the cloth."

A moment's pause, during which he and Miriam stared hard at each other, quite unmindful of the curious glances which they were drawing upon themselves from the company of tourists. Then the old warrior's real and forceful self came out. He strode firmly across the terrace to the group of guides and donkey-boys, and gave sharply two or three orders.

In a few minutes, — which seemed like hours to Miriam Lindley, — a straggling line of wondering tourists was pushing out from Mariette's House, toward the designated spot on the desert, Miriam among the foremost, and the General, now sitting a donkey, at her side.

As they hurried forward the white cloth again appeared, rising and sinking at regular intervals. This added, if possible, increased speed to the eager, anxious cavalcade.

Ten minutes of rapid progress brought them near the place. The manifest excitement of Sir Hugh and Miriam had been caught by the others; donkey-boys chattered and guides looked wise, and all felt that something of great moment was impending.

Again the rod and cloth appeared, now clearly seen to be pushed up through a crevice among some blocks of stone, nearly covered by sand. At the same instant, as Sir Hugh and Miriam were crossing a dune, the eager girl's keen eyes caught sight of the heads and shoulders of two men, a hundred yards away, — the men being the evil-looking Arab guide and Count Maranville.

The suspected men glanced at each other, paused, and then came boldly back toward the crowd of tourists. Suddenly, they seemed

to catch sight of the cloth on the pole, and Sir Hugh noted plainly that they halted and hesitated, then again came on.

A few more rods of hurried, huddled advance, and the old General, now feeling himself in command, laid hold of the pole and cloth and drew them up: "Leavenworth's pole and handkerchief, I think," he remarked, concisely, and gave them to Miriam. Then he shouted twice at the top of his voice, "Leavenworth!"

Not two seconds of silence followed before an answering cry came up from below. "Hulloa! Hulloa! Sir Hugh Kenyon!" And that response revealed the larger part of the mystery. Sir Hugh knew, now, that his young American friend was shut in one of the tombs, or Mastabas, so numerous in that gloomy region.

The more intelligent of the guides also grasped the situation, and at once eager hands began scooping back the sand from the blocks of stone; and next, with care, — for the thin desert sand flowed like water, — two of the smaller stone blocks themselves were lifted aside, revealing a dark opening beneath. "Leavenworth, is that you?" called the General, who now walked firmly and freely, having quite forgotten about his crutches.

"Yes! Is that you, Sir Hugh?" came up Gerald Leavenworth's voice, clear and strong.

"Are you hurt?" asked the General, with anxiety no longer concealed. "Not a bit," was the prompt response. "Send me down a line of some sort, if you can."

Sir Hugh beckoned his guide. "Do you think there is a rope anywhere in this crowd, or at Mariette's House?"

The guide answered, "Think no, General; but climbing-party at Sakkarah Pyramid; if you wait ——"

"No, No!" and a moment's reflection; then prompt action from the resourceful old warrior. "Mohammed, take three or four donkey-boys over behind that dune! Then off with their gelebeeahs, cut the cloth into strips, knot them into a rope, and bring the rope here! Quick now!"

During this delay the Count came up, outwardly serene, but, to the General's eye, really much disturbed. He made polite inquiry, feigned deep interest, and tried to engage Miriam in conversation; but the girl returned only formal replies.

In a few minutes the guide returned with the improvised rope.

Sir Hugh now gave directions to two or three strong guides; the rope was lowered, and, in another minute, Gerald Leavenworth stood, safe and sound, among them.

First he grasped Sir Hugh's hand gratefully. Then his glance fell upon Miriam, standing, with Lady Harriet, a short distance apart; she was pale, and one arm was laid heavily over her donkey's back, while the other hand grasped, — as if for support, — the measuring-pole. "Poor girl, she looks terribly frightened," he exclaimed, and started towards her.

At that instant, Gerald first noticed the Count, standing a few yards off; and, at sight of him, the young fellow's frank, joyous expression vanished. With a stern, angry knitting of his brows, he started toward the alert, defiant Belgian.

Sir Hugh saw the Count's hand steal into his coat-pocket; and, remembering the pistol, he strode, — with remarkable vigor and celerity for a disabled veteran, — between the two men; so that Gerald, who impulsively spoke at once, spoke over the General's head, which he did easily, being several inches the taller:

"That man," he exclaimed, "has attempted my life. It is no fault of his that I am not now buried alive. I will ——"

He was tremendously angry, and the General grew more and more anxious. Then the Count broke in, with feigned ease and confidence. "What is the use of making this scene? I say to you, Sir Hugh Kenyon, — and I will maintain it before the 'Mixed Tribunal' at Cairo, — that I have just made, with the aid of this guide, a very important 'find'; nothing less than the long-sought Mastaba of Ptah Hotaph the First. This young man has somehow learned of my discovery, and ——"

"You lie!" exclaimed Gerald, now nearly wild with indignation and anger. The cool audacity of the man astounded him.

Sir Hugh, deeply anxious, begged Gerald to control himself.

The Count was following a subtle policy, all his own; and he now spoke, with almost convincing calmness and steadiness. "There is no good in calling names. The 'find' is mine; my guide will support my statement." He turned and levelled his compelling eyes on his unscrupulous Arab companion, who answered, in an even voice, "Yes. He all right. Count all right."

Then the astute Belgian conceived a bold idea. "Come! And,

to prove my claim, I will show you the entrance;" he said, confidently, and started across the sands.

The entire party, much mystified, streamed after him and his guide. "I found the entrance, last week," said Gerald, aside to Sir Hugh, "and I partly explored the Mastaba. I have good reason to think that this villain set a watch on me; that wretch of an Arab is now in his pay. At any rate, the Count has never entered the Mastaba, I am sure."

After a few minutes of winding amid the dunes and rock-heaps, Count Maranville approached an opening among the great boulders. "Here was the ancient gateway," he explained. "You see a part of the carved lions; it was by this entrance that I entered and explored the Mastaba; I was the first person, probably, to enter it (here he looked defiantly over his shoulder at Gerald), for thousands of years."

The man's cleverness and audacity were marvellous. Gerald, frank, ingenuous fellow, could hardly credit his ears.

The Count continued, almost gaily, "Follow me, and you shall see that I know the way." And taking a candle, — produced and lighted by his guide, — he led the party in.

"Slowly, General, slowly!" whispered Gerald; and there was a strange, intense vibration in his voice.

"Come on, Come on!" encouragingly called the Count, now a few yards in advance. "See! The floor is sandy and nearly level. I have never — "O God!" The Count's last tone suddenly leaped to a shriek of fear, and darkness enveloped all.

There was a wild rush, by most of the party, towards the entrance. Gerald led Sir Hugh slowly and steadily out into the light, where guides and tourists were huddled in alarm.

Turning to the evil-eyed Arab guide, — his former helper, — Gerald said, slowly and sternly, "Achmed, bring that rope which I used in climbing out! Take two or three men and go back into the Mastaba! But go carefully! There is a chasm cut across that sandy path! It was probably cut by order of the buried king, Ptah Hotaph, to entrap eager, hasty thieves. It is eight feet across and twenty deep. I explored it last week. The dusty remnants, — hundreds of years old, — of several robbers are there. Your master may or may not add his body to the number."

The old General, now feeling relieved of the burden of command by this vigorous youth, began to be conscious of his own infirmities, and muttered: "Served the beggar right! Once in a while things do come out right, in this wicked world."

Presently the two caught sight of Miriam; Lady Kenyon had now joined her. "A wonderful girl, that!" exclaimed Sir Hugh, pausing and contemplating her in the distance. "You don't know it, but only for her remarkable eyesight you would probably be underground now."

Gerald sighed: "She is the noblest girl I ever saw." Then he added, haltingly, and dejectedly, "If — if only she ——"

"If only what?" echoed Sir Hugh, stopping short and staring hard at Gerald's clouded face.

"Oh, I was merely going to say," resumed Gerald, — but in a more natural tone, "that she seemed dreadfully overcome by fright and anxiety, as she stood by that donkey, holding my pole. I must go quickly ——"

"Gerald Leavenworth," exclaimed Sir Hugh, with emphasis, and seizing the young archæologist firmly by the arm. "You are a fool. Hear me say that again! You are a blind fool! 'Fright!' 'Anxiety!' do you call it?"

The old General fairly snorted with indignation. Then his manner suddenly changed; he addressed Gerald in a tone of quick, chill contempt. "You may know all about tombs and dead kings, but you don't know when a splendid girl loves you; yes, and has fought for your life, — because she loves you. I don't think she knew her own heart, a week ago; but she does now. If you have any lingering atom of common sense, please ——"

Gerald Leavenworth did not hear the completion of the irate sentence. He was leaping eagerly across the sand-dunes, — toward Miriam Lindley. For the moment, at least, he had forgotten about the Count Maranville, and he cared not a whit for even the tomb of Ptah Hotaph the Great.

The Trick That Turned.*

BY DON MARK LEMON.

IT came to him like an all-trump hand, and as Van Kurtz mentally grasped the cards that luck had dealt him in his little game against the gas company, he began to laugh, at first softly, so as not to awaken his wife, but as the jeweled fingers of good fortune continued to tickle his ribs, he could restrain himself no longer and shook the bed with unconfined hilarity.

His wife woke, and in some alarm inquired the cause of his amazing humor.

"I've got 'em!" he cried exultantly. "Make me pay for gas I never burned, will they!"

"Gas!" exclaimed the wife. "What are you talking about, John?"

For answer Van Kurtz got out of bed and lighted a candle. "I'm going down cellar, my dear. You needn't stay awake until I return." And despite his astonished wife's protest, he stepped through the door and disappeared down the back stairs, attired only in his night-shirt.

Shortly before, Van Kurtz had returned with his family from a month's absence in the country, to find in his letter-box a bill for gas used during the time the house had been closed. Hurrying down to the company's office, he had protested the bill as an outrage; but the clerk assured him that the meter showed two thousand feet of gas used during the preceding month, and as the meter could not lie he would have to pay the bill.

The meter in question hung on a beam near the foot of the cellar stairs, and Van Kurtz chuckled as he thrust the flickering

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candle into its face. It was one of the regular pattern, and the dials read:

The gas-man had taught Van Kurtz how to read the meter as follows: "When the arrow on this here dial to the right gets clear 'round the circle, then you've burned a thousand feet of gas, and the arrow on this here middle dial will have moved one figure to the left. That's what registers them thousand feet. Now, when the arrow on this here middle dial gets clear 'round its circle, then you've used ten thousand feet of gas, and this arrow here on this dial here to the left will have moved along one figure. That's what registers them ten thousand feet you've burned. So you see this left dial keeps track of the other two, and when it gets clear 'round to where it started from, you've burned a hundred thousand feet."

Again Van Kurtz chuckled, as his scheme for beating the gas company lay and sparkled, all rounded and polished, in the hollow of his brain.

"So the meter can't lie, can't it," he mused. "Well, you watch this old fox make it prevaricate." He brought a soap-box and spent an hour laying out his campaign, then his wife appeared on the scene and coaxed him back to bed.

Next morning at breakfast Van Kurtz took his family, comprising wife, daughter and baby, into his brilliant discovery, as to how every man can beat his own gas company.

"My dears, it is as simple to get gas for nothing, when you once know the trick, as to say 'prunes and prisms' with your hands, when your mouth is full of persimmons. You see, by burning exactly one hundred thousand feet of gas per month, the arrows on the three dials will revolve around to precisely where they stood at the time we began on the hundred thousand feet, and there will be left no record in or on the meter to show that a solitary foot of gas has been consumed. The hundred thousand

dial is a final register of the other dials, and by burning sufficient gas to make the arrow on that dial go entirely around the circle and come back to where it originally stood, the tally is lost. The gas company counts on sending a man to read the meter before enough gas has been used to wipe out that tally."

It was a great scheme, and Van Kurtz dwelt upon its many sides. Indeed, it had as numerous faces as a big diamond, and shone and allured as amazingly.

Van Kurtz spread out his hands, as if he were warming them over his own glowing ideas. "All we will need to do, my dears, will be to use exactly one hundred thousand feet of gas per month, and I shall now search the four corners of ways-and-means for devices by which we can dispose of one hundred thousand feet of best illuminating gas in a highly useful and satisfactory manner."

In Van Kurtz's composition there unquestionably was a broad, rich streak of mechanical genius, for the early winter sun had not set before the baby was being rocked in its cradle, not by the hand of the mother, as wont, but by the power of illuminating gas, applied and directed by the father of the infant.

Van Kurtz glowed, as his wife came into the room after a day's Christmas shopping and saw the happy consummation of his labor. "And feel, my dear, how warm the room is; this gas heat beats the furnace all hollow." In the corner opposite the gas-rocked cradle glowed a handsome gas heating-stove that Van Kurtz had that day installed in his home with eleven other similar stoves.

He continued. "I telephoned the firm this noon, saying I am not feeling in the best of health, and asked for a few days' leave of absence. It was granted, and I shall spend the time constructing such useful devices as this cradle, and all run without any expense whatever, my dear; without any expense whatever."

Next morning, after a good night's rest, Van Kurtz was up bright and early, and straight away set about devising means by which he could consume gas to some useful purpose. He succeeded wonderfully, and it was not many days before the whole house seemed to go by gas. He purchased a handsome coffee grinder and bought his coffee in the bean, just that he might turn the machine by gas-power, and added an expensive dish-washer to the kitchen, for the same reason.

Coming to the end of the useful, or at least to a knot in the useful that he was unable to untangle, he turned to what his wife deemed wholly needless, and getting out the ice-cream freezer and applying gas-power to that machine, he succeeded in making seven quarts of ice-cream for his ninth of December dinner.

This so elated him that he proposed to go the limit one better. The next day he returned from the library with a large popular scientific book, which he laid upon the table, with his face beaming like a Welsbach.

"No more ice-trust for me!" he exclaimed. "This book tells how any one can make his own ice by burning a light in a vacuum. All I need now is a vacuum."

"But, John," protested his wife, "we really don't need any ice." She drew back the curtain and revealed a glimpse of a snow-covered world without.

Van Kurtz was of a different opinion. "It's a cold day," he said, "when a piece of ice won't come in handy. Besides, I may be able to use two hundred thousand feet of gas per month, and hit the company one swifter."

The next morning he procured the appliances to create a vacuum, and things worked out so well that before nightfall he might have started a little independent ice-trust.

Van Kurtz proved himself a positive genius for doing the wrong thing correctly. His calculations fell out with such nicety that the morning the meter-man came to inspect the meter, the arrow on the one-hundred-thousand-foot dial pointed straight as a die to the figure 9, where it had pointed at the beginning of the month, and of necessity neither of the other arrows varied a hair from where they, too, had pointed at the beginning of the month. The three arrows had returned to where they stood on the books of the company, and the record of gas used had been killed.

The inspector swore when he compared the dials of the meter with his house-book. "The old duffer hasn't used a foot of gas this month. Guess he's sore about that November bill."

Van Kurtz, at the head of the cellar stairs, laughed softly as this comment from below reached his ears, and when the inspector had gone, he returned to his ice-making vacuum and hugged it in his delight.

No gas-bill for the month of December was left in Van Kurtz's mail-box, and encouraged by this fact, that gentleman grew venturesome and set about contriving ways, shifts and appliances for consuming two hundred thousand feet of gas during the month of January.

It necessitated sending another message to his employers, asking for a second leave of absence, which was granted, and led to the purchase of innumerable mechanical contrivances at no inconsiderable expense. Indeed, the loss of salary and the cost of the various mechanical appliances, would total considerably more than the price of the gas which he was filching of the gas company. But Van Kurtz didn't look at the matter from a view-point of figures, but from one of revenge.

"Then consider, my dears," he argued, "the first cost of these appliances will soon be more than paid for by their utility. Take the sewing-machine there, for instance. Isn't it much pleasanter to turn a little lever and let gas do the work than to have to pedal the thing with your feet?"

Mrs. Van Kurtz looked dubious, but Miss Van Kurtz came to the rescue of the dear delusion of her father. "Indeed it is! But why don't you build a big gas-tank and store gas for the neighbors? Just think, you might get an automobile, and run it with gas."

Failing to catch the subtle irony of his daughter's remark, Van Kurtz wandered off down cellar. "Pretty smart girl, is Bess," he soliloquized. "Guess I'll go down town and look up autos."

After studying the meter awhile, he returned up-stairs. "I'm going down town," he informed his wife. "The meter has got around to one hundred and eighty thousand feet. Twenty thousand feet more and we will have stuck the company for two hundred thousand feet. Make me pay for gas I never burned, will they!"

"But suppose the gas-man should come and look at the meter before that hundred-thousand arrow has got back to where it started?"

Van Kurtz smiled. "My dear, you know he invariably calls here the first, and I'll take care that before that date the one-hundred-thousand arrow gets around to figure 9."

There was a ring at the door-bell, and a minute later Miss Van Kurtz announced that the gas-man wanted to go down cellar and inspect the meter.

"The who?" gasped Van Kurtz, falling against the sitting-room heater in his alarm.

"The gas-meter man. The company has changed owners, he says, and they're inspecting the meters."

"Impossible!" shouted Van Kurtz. "He mustn't see that meter! Great Cæsar! it's twenty thousand short of getting around the circle!"

He rushed down-stairs in time to bar the way of the gas-man, making for the back stairs. "Look out!" he shouted. "There's a dog with the hydrophobia down there!" The man hastily retreated toward the front door. "Come around to-morrow," procrastinated the master of the house. "If he doesn't get better, I'll have him sent over to my mother-in-law."

As the man went out, Van Kurtz wiped the perspiration from his face. "That was a stiff one," he soliloquized; "but I had to tell it to hold up my end. Wouldn't do to fall down now. Eighty thousand feet at one-twenty-five a thousand is a hundred dollars. Ten tens. Jumping frogs!"

He got paper and pencil and covered several sheets with figures, but the best he could do by the time the gas-man should return, he calculated, would be to burn less than eight thousand feet of gas, whereas he must needs burn twenty thousand feet to bring the arrow on the one-hundred-thousand dial around to figure 9, where it had started at the beginning of the month, and where it stood on the books of the gas company.

An hour later the meter-man returned. He was passing by, he said, and thought he would stop and see if the dog had been shot. Mrs. Van Kurtz detained him while her husband stole down cellar and barked like a phonograph. The fellow retreated hastily, and Van Kurtz came up-stairs with his throat raw and hoarse and his temper tied into sailor knots.

The next day the gas-man called again, and the arrow on the left dial fell short of the eighty-eight-thousand mark. Van Kurtz and the two women folks maintained a tip-toed, breathless silence in the hallway, while their visitor rang the front-door bell dumb,

then went around and pounded at the bolted back entry until the canned goods in the pantry rattled. Finally he left in disgust, and it was two days before he returned. Van Kurtz was in the cellar at the time, jubilantly inspecting the gas-meter.

"It's got around to ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and sixty feet!" he called up the stairs. "Another ten minutes, and we've got 'em!"

Just then the bell rang violently and Van Kurtz knew that the gas-man had come and would no longer be denied admittance.

"Bolt the doors," he whispered hoarsely to his daughter. "Don't let the fellow in on your life!" Then he began to jump up and down before the gas-meter. "Go it, you danged little arrow!" he cried. "Go it, I say!"

It was like a race, with the horses neck-and-neck on the home stretch. The arrow of the one-hundred-thousand-foot dial was Van Kurtz's horse, while the gas-man was the other horse. Would "Arrow" win, or would he lose by a nose — the gas-man's nose?

The women folks hung at the head of the cellar stairs, while from below came the hoarse voice of Van Kurtz, cheering on the gas-meter, and from above came the whir of the electric bell, vibrating under the lean, angry thumb of the gas-man, who stood on the snow-covered steps without.

"He's going around the back way, father!" whispered Miss Van Kurtz, as the bell ceased to ring and heavy footsteps echoed from the rear.

"Bolt the back door!" cried Van Kurtz. "Go it, you bullet-head; go it!"

But the kitchen door had been left ajar and the gas-man thrust himself in and advanced across the room. Realizing the danger, the two women folks left the stairs and falling on the neck of their astonished visitor, bore him into a chair with the combined weight of their affections.

"Oh, John," cried Mrs. Van Kurtz, "how glad we are to have you back with us again! How could you desert us like that? How could you?"

The gas-man attempted to rise and protest, but he was borne back and Miss Van Kurtz drew up the kitchen table and set a week of pies at his elbow. "Eat, dear, and talk afterwards," she said.

"Yes, do eat, John," pressed the elder woman. "You must be hungry after being away to sea five years."

She cut a huge wedge from a pumpkin pie and thrust it at her visitor. The latter grinned.

"Sure, ma'am, I'll eat. But before I stop my mouth with pies like mother used to make, just get wise that I don't pay a cent for this spread. So here goes."

Two large pieces had gone the way of all good pies, when suddenly the gas-man paused with a triangle of crust in his mouth and listened intently. Jubilant shouts were coming from the cellar. Van Kurtz was cheering the gas-meter down the home stretch to the tape. The gas-man's eyes shot a-squint with suspicion, and, arising, he leapt for the cellar stairs and descended in three bounds.

As he struck the ground, Van Kurtz's hand shot out and shut off the gas, just as the arrow on the one-hundred-thousand-foot dial pointed straight to the figure 9. Then that wily gentleman thrust his hands into his pockets and whistled a stave from the latest popular air.

The gas-man studied the meter thoroughly and long. Finally he demanded, "Ain't you people using any more gas?"

Van Kurtz smiled. "Read the meter, man; read the meter. The meter says we haven't burned a foot, and the meter can't lie."

Again the inspector referred to his book. Then he swung a monkey-wrench from his back pocket and began to unbolt the meter from its place against the post.

"What are you doing?" demanded Van Kurtz.

The other growled: "If you don't use no gas, you don't need no meter. Those are my orders."

Van Kurtz sat down weakly on his favorite soap-box. "What do you want with a meter, anyway," demanded the inspector, "if you don't use any gas?" He lifted the meter from its shelf, and whistling the same tune that Van Kurtz had essayed, climbed the cellar stairs with the red measuring tank in his hands.

After a time Van Kurtz got up, and going back up-stairs roamed from room to room, staring at the various expensive appliances that he had purchased for the sole purpose of consuming illuminating gas. They were now practically useless.

"I'll have to send out and get some candles to see by to-night," he mused.

Just then there came a ring at the door-bell, and he went to the head of the stairs and listened. Mrs. Van Kurtz opened the door. On the steps was a brisk young fellow in automobile dress, and beyond, alongside the curbstone, was a big red auto.

"Does Mr. Van Kurtz live here?" inquired the chauffeur.

"Yes."

"Is he at home?"

"Yes."

"Tell him I've brought the gas-auto."

"Gas-auto! Has my husband bought a gas automobile — and paid for it?"

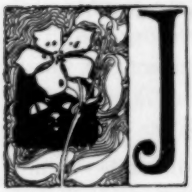
"Yes, ma'am. He ordered one of our new 'Gas-o-Run' models." The chauffeur pointed at the big red auto. "That's the machine."

Mrs. Van Kurtz turned and called up-stairs. "Oh, John, dear, here's your new gas-auto."

She could hardly believe that the foolish face trying to smile down at her was that of her husband.

The New Shikari.*

BY CYRIL ETHERIDGE.



JACK TREVOR glanced approvingly from the letter in his hand to the slim, well-knit figure before him.

"So you are Yakoob, the new shikari," he said.

"Yes, Sahib, Gopal is sick. For two days the fever has not left him, and the Commissioner has sent me in his place; there is the letter."

"That is good," replied the other, "for he and I had arranged to start today to hunt tiger in the Mandlah jungle. When will you be ready to start?"

"I am ready even now; but, if your honor approves, I have yet a better plan. I have come to you in a good moment and will surely bring you luck. Listen, Sahib, the Bettiah man-eater killed last night."

Trevor started up and his eyes sparkled.

"The Bettiah man-eater. Why, I thought he was a hundred miles away—he hasn't been heard of for months. How do you know it was he?"

"Kiramet Ali brought me the news at dawn today. Moreover it is easy, there is a claw missing on the left foot. It is surely he. Besides no other tiger has the strength or courage to do what he did last night."

"What did he do?" asked Trevor, bending forward eagerly.

"When he was last here many months ago, the men of Lalpur built a thorn zeriba round their village, and they sleep yet with barred doors. Last night he sprang over the thorns and then on to the roof of a hut. He tore his way through the thatch and seized Ram Persad; and, leaping out again, carried him towards the Black Mountain."

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"Ram Persad? Well, I am sorry. He was a real good man. However, I guess it was soon over. Look here, Yakoob, we must stop this brute, how shall we proceed?"

"Sahib, I have the arrangement ready, if your honor approves. Kiramat has already returned to Lalpur to prepare. He will not say aught to any one of this matter. Let us ride out there now, and we shall find him ready at the village with a Bhil tracker. We will take up the pugs from the village, and, if our luck is good, we shall come on the body, while the sun is still high and the tiger is sleeping. There will surely be a root or rock near by. There we will build our machan, and your honor and I will sit there with our rifles and watch. During the night the tiger will return to his kill. Then the Sahib will slay him."

"What about the moon?" asked Trevor.

"The moon is on our side — it is full and rises early. If the beast of ill omen come in good time, the Sahib will see him in daylight."

Trevor threw away his half-smoked cigar, and rose, alert and eager. "Come, Yakoob, let us get started."

"I thought the Sahib would not delay," said the other, with an approving smile, "aye, let us hasten, for no one yet knows, but news ever travels apace, and the village is but six khos distant."

In a few moments the pair were cantering out of the cantonments, Trevor gripping his horse with a keen sense of excitement. During his six months' hunting trip to India, many a fine pair of horns and many a good trophy had fallen to his rifle. But a tiger, and a man-eater, and to crown all, the famous Bettiah man-eater! Surely the gods were good to him this day. If he could but add this scalp to his bag, he would surely return home to New York the best-satisfied man in the world. For report had it that he was a brute of the most marked individuality. At times stealthy and full of low cunning, then for a space he seemed imbued with some demon of reckless savagery. Appearing here and there at points many miles apart with extraordinary suddenness, he would seize his victim and disappear. In this way he had spread terror and destruction over half Central India. But one man only had seen him. A terrified woodcutter, high perched in a peepul tree, had marked him returning from an unsuccessful

night's hunting. The man averred that he was as large as an ox, that his eyes flamed fire, that on his forehead was Vishnu's sacred mark, so that no man could harm him, and that a little gray wizened jackal ran in front. The reports, even if highly colored, tended to show here was a foeman worthy of the hunter's best efforts.

"Do you think we shall get him, Yakoob?" asked Trevor, as they neared the village.

"If our kismet is good, we surely will; but if there are no trees or rocks near, who can say? The beast is full of guile, and he has escaped many a time. But it is in my mind that he will die tonight, for we know that the Sahib holds a straight rifle," and Yakoob smiled confidently. "See, yonder is Lalpur; and beyond, the Black Mountain wears its cap; that is a good sign."

In the village all was excitement and confusion, but nothing practical had been done. Time and method are but of little account in a country where Buddha lay on his left side for three thousand years, contemplating the universe and the meaning of the grasshoppers' song; and then, turning leisurely over, let the universe and the grasshoppers contemplate him for a similar period. The arrival of Yakoob, however, soon put a new complexion on matters. He speedily annexed a native bedstead, some rope, and an axe, and piled them on a protesting coolie. Then he selected a Bhil tracker with no little care. Finally, handing over the food and water to Kiramat, he got rid of, with tact and difficulty, the voluble Mulik and the crowd of chattering villagers, all offering advice on every conceivable point, and cleared rapidly out of the village.

At first all was plain sailing. The tracks of the huge beast with his ghastly burden showed clearly through the undergrowth. On the thorn bushes every here and there fluttered a shred of the ill-fated man's doti, and on the broad, upturned leaves the flies rose buzzing from the half-dried clots of blood. Through sun-washed glades and over the little streams, murmuring pleasantly over the pebbles, the Bhil led them with never a fault or check. Then, as they left the grassy parklands behind, and began to ascend the rocky slopes of the mountain, he worked with more difficulty. Several times he paused at fault, then throwing a ring

would pick up the tracks again and lead on. Slower and yet slower he worked on towards a deep cut ravine, that had eaten its way into the mountain side. Scarcer and more stunted became the trees, and rough black rocks replaced the thick dhup grass.

As they followed up, the sides became more precipitous and the ravine more gloomy and forbidding. The sun dropped behind the bank of clouds on the mountain top, and the rising wind began to bluster through the cleft. Trevor's eager anticipation sobered down to the grim reality, as he walked with his rifle at the ready on the tracker's right, and he found himself studying Yakoob's face more and more often.

The new shikari seemed oblivious of the others' presence. A look of anxious determination had replaced his confident smile. Stealthy, keen-eyed, and alert, nothing seemed to escape the restless eye, that scanned every sign in front and around. Noiselessly he glided from rock to rock, taking advantage of every inequality of ground, and testing the wind every now and then. Presently he stiffened into stone, low crouched behind some brushwood, motioning the others to do the same.

"There is the body, Sahib," he whispered, pointing to two solitary trees in front.

"Where? I do not see."

"The white spot under the tree on the right hand. I see two vultures," and as he spoke, the ill-omened birds rose heavily, and, just clearing the tree tops, with slow strokes flapped lazily down the ravine.

"Will the man-eater be there?" whispered Trevor.

Yakoob shook his head doubtfully. "Not so, Sahib, except it is dark and gloomy. No, he will surely be in the jungle below near the water, but it is best to be ready. But," he added, pointing to the frightened Bhil, "shall we let him return? His work is done, and his heart is turned to water."

Trevor nodded assent, and keeping together they crept forward from cover to cover towards the huddled figure lying there so still and white. Step by step, shoulder to shoulder, they slowly gained ground until Yakoob was satisfied the coast was clear.

With morbid curiosity Trevor looked at the dead man's face. For a moment he was silent, then he raised an unsteady hand.

"Look, Yakoob, look," he said, hoarsely, pointing a shaking finger, the horror reflecting in his own eyes, "look at his face," and he swung round abruptly.

"Aye, Sahib," said the other, and he nodded his head gravely, "they ever look like that. I have seen many."

Something seemed to grip Trevor's heart, as, keeping his back turned, he gazed at the smiling plain below still bathed in warm sunshine. Never could he forget the look of insensate terror in those stark, dead eyes, staring up so blindly to heaven, as if in mute appeal against that terrible fate. Then he turned round and looked again in grim fascination.

"Why, that man was — alive — was alive — till he reached here," and his voice rose unsteadily as he finished.

The other nodded again slowly. "It was even so, Sahib. Therefore it is better to slay these low-born beasts of ill omen, lest other men's eyes should look like that," and he laid his hand on the other's arm.

Trevor's momentary horror began to subside under that steady touch and look. "That's right, Yakoob, that's right. Let us get to work, and we'll slay this beast of ill omen anyway."

The shikari examined the ground and trees with care.

"The tree will do, Sahib, but it is small and old and has not too much strength. See, we will bind the bed between the fork, it will serve as a machan. So, now the Sahib will get a clear shot. We must not touch the body."

In a few moments food, water and rifles were in their place, and all was ready.

"And now, Sahib," said Yakoob, after satisfying himself that nothing had been forgotten, "shall we let Kiramat Ali and the coolie go? The sun is getting low."

"What time do they usually come back to their kill?" asked Trevor, as they watched the gun carrier and coolie hurrying down the ravine.

"Who can tell, Sahib? There is no rule. Sometimes as the sun sets, sometimes at night, and again I have known them come in the gray of the dawn; but it is ever best to be ready."

Trevor paused for a moment before climbing into the machan to take a last look at the plain below, which the last rays of the

setting sun seemed to clothe with a shimmer of green and gold. Then, as he turned back reluctantly to the gloomy ravine, some dull, heavy weight seemed to fall on his head, and he lurched forward on his face without a sound. When at length he opened his eyes languidly, he seemed to be in a sort of trance. In vain he tried to move or speak, and the dull weight still seemed pressing on his brain.

"Yakoob," he managed to call out at length, but his voice sounded thin and far off, "what has happened? Where are you?"

There was no answer, but, like a man in a bad dream, he saw Yakoob a little way off talking to a native. Then he saw him return alone.

"Yakoob," he cried again, "come and help me. Something is hurting my head, and I can't move. Why is it?"

This time his voice seemed stronger, for the man came towards him and sat down quietly on a rock near by. Then he produced a silver case, selected a cigarette with care, moistened the tip, and lit it.

"It is because you are bound, Sahib," and he inhaled the smoke with relish.

"Bound? Who bound me?" and Trevor stared from the silver case to the man's face.

"I did, Sahib."

"You?" and the dull pain seemed gradually to lift from his head.

"Don't you know who I am, Trevor? Look again," and the man suddenly plucked the beard and turban from his stained face with a laugh.

"You are — you are — Great God!"

"Stephano Cassini, doctor of medicine, civil practitioner of Jubbulpore, leading member of the Simla Amateur Dramatic Society, well known for his skilful impersonation of natives' parts and for his prowess as a shikari. Also several other claims to distinction, to wit, husband of one Lucille Cassini, pretty woman, but — flighty — very," and he flicked the ash daintily from his cigarette.

Trevor stared in open-mouthed fascination, the unknown horror creeping again into his eyes.

"Now listen to me, my young American friend. You think yourselves mighty smart your side of the water, but occasionally you get left. See here, I know all about you and my wife. It would be a queer thing if I hadn't sized up what the whole of Jubbulpore knows. You thought you had the laugh on me, but I have just been waiting my time and watching you both. A couple of days ago I taxed my wife. She confessed."

"It's a lie, I say," burst from the other furiously, "it's a blackguard lie. Your wife is a good woman."

The doctor smiled approvingly. "Quite right," he said, "quite the proper thing to say. It is always correct to lie under these circumstances, but I am afraid it won't help you much. Anyway she confessed she loved you. So I wanted my revenge. We Italians are, I fear, addicted to extremes in love and war. But I wanted something quite new and original, so I thought it over. And I think," he added, with an air of pardonable pride, pensively watching a ring of smoke ascend, "the present situation is strong — one might almost say, powerful. I deserve quite a little credit for evolving it. It would be worth a lot to our friends of the aforesaid dramatic society."

"So you see you will lie there neatly pegged out," he resumed, "and presently I'll insert this gag. By and by, our friend the man-eater will come along. You remember the look in Ram Persad's eyes?" and he paused.

"Have you no justice or mercy?" cried the other, the sweat rolling off his face, and he struggled impotently, until the cords ate into his flesh. "I tell you again, the thing is a lie, the most infernal lie. It is a blackguard thing to talk of your wife in that way."

"Quite right," repeated the doctor admiringly, "I'm bound to say your moral attitude is exceptionally correct, quite that of a man of honor. You Americans are gentlemen, anyway. But if you'll excuse me, I'll see the finish from the machan; the sun is almost down," and deftly inserting the gag, he clambered leisurely into the tree.

The last rays of the sun caught Trevor full in the face and accentuated the look of terror in Ram Persad's eyes; then, slanting upwards, they bathed the tree and the swarthy, evil face peering

through the branches in a flood of burnished gold, and disappeared.

The short-lived Indian twilight rapidly deepened into gloom, and Trevor, wearied with the agony of his useless struggles, lay passive and inert, almost too dazed to think. It was difficult to say which of the three was the stillest, the man watching from the tree, the bound man before him, or the white thing, whose stark eyes stared blindly at the stars. So still they lay, that all around them began to rustle the weird mysteries of the jungle night. Stealthy, sinuous movements, secret meetings and whisperings. Then the noiseless stalk, the silent spring, the muffled cry, and the one had met its doom, and the other its supper. With a stifled squeak a rat ran over the bound man, and a snake in hot pursuit threw its cold, clammy length across his face. With a low, warning hiss it discovered its mistake, and with a convulsive wriggle disappeared into the darkness.

The rising glory of the full moon struck him on the face, and the man opened his eyes with an effort. Facing him he could distinguish the dark figure in the tree and the gleam of relentless eyes, staring fixedly past him towards the lower end of the ravine. He himself could see nothing but the upper end. So much the better — the beast would come unknown and noiseless from behind. He would be spared the agony of watching the stealthy advance, the sudden spring.

Presently he saw faint flecks of light beyond the trees. Like fireflies they flickered here and there, coming and going behind the rocks, but ever closer. Suddenly his eyes strained to their widest, and something seemed to grip and stop his heart, as he distinguished a huge, shadowy form gliding noiselessly from cover to cover, and the fireflies resolved themselves into the gleam of yellow eyes.

The man-eater checked behind a rock, as he winded the fresh taint of man. Some one had been meddling with his kill, and the dull yellow eyes came slowly round the edge to reconnoitre. The kill was there, but there had been other men there! aye, and might be there still, and the tail began to switch to and fro in angry jerks. Was it a trap? Trevor could just distinguish the head protruding beyond the rock; then it disappeared.

Suddenly with a noiseless spring the tiger alighted catlike on a rock behind the tree. Silhouetted against the moon the low crouched form was distinctly visible, the great head lying flat on the surface between the paws. In the flood of the silver moonlight the man could see the eyes narrowed to two slits, the look of eager expectancy, and the tail switching ominously. Good heavens, he had winded the man in the tree first!

With eyes nearly starting out of his head, Trevor watched the drama unfolding itself, almost forgetting the horror of his own situation. Cassini was apparently unaware of the presence of the man-eater, for with grim patience and without a move he was still watching the other end of the ravine.

Then the bound man seemed to hear a faint whisper, at first nothing but the sighing of warm breath against his ear. Then he could just catch the words:

"Be not afraid, Sahib, do not speak or move. It is I, Gopal, and I have a rifle," and he felt a knife grating to and fro against the rope. "My heart misgave me when I heard of the new shikari, and I came hither and spoke to him," continued the whispered words, "then I was the more afraid, for I knew not who he was."

As Trevor felt the welcome relief of the slackening cords, the huge, tawny length flashed through the moonlight, and the tree swayed ominously to and fro, as the brute landed solidly against the lower fork. As it jerked sharply forward, a rifle clattered noisily to the ground, then with an agonized yell, Cassini, with wildly clutching arms followed, crashing through the branches. At the same moment the tiger, unable to make good his foothold, landed, catlike, on his feet.

For a moment man and beast stood staring at each other, then with a yell of terror the man darted for the other tree. With a bound the tiger followed and sprang, but the man, terror lending wings to his feet, darted behind the trunk, but not before the outstretched claws had scored deeply across his face, as the tiger's spring carried him past. As Cassini flew back again to the first tree, his foot caught and he fell headlong. For the second time man and beast were face to face, the man on his knees with outstretched arms, screaming madly in terror and pain, and the beast

checked on his haunches with uplifted paw, like a cat playing with a mouse.

Meanwhile, with a few deft sweeps of his knife, Gopal had cut through the rope, and Trevor stood free, rifle in hand. In an instant he placed a couple of bullets behind the tiger's shoulder. As it dropped in its death agony, Cassini's screams ceased, and he rose slowly to his feet, and burst into peal after peal of horrid laughter. Suddenly there was silence, as the man, fighting for breath, clawed wildly at his throat and chest. Then he lurched heavily forward on his face, and lay motionless between the man-eater and the body of Ram Persad.

A Business Proposition.*

BY W. CRAWFORD SHERLOCK.

ENTLEMEN, I am thirty thousand dollars short in my accounts as trustee!"

Howard Marriott, prominent in the legal profession, director of several banks and trustee of the estates of many widows and orphans, spoke calmly and deliberately. There was no tremor in his voice, no quiver of his lips, no flush upon his pale cheeks as he made the startling announcement.

The three gentlemen, each president of a large life insurance company, sitting on the opposite side of the long desk, stared at each other in blank amazement at Marriott's confession, — then fixed their eyes upon the speaker.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Marriott," declared Mr. Walker, president of the Saracen Company.

"I am, or rather, I have been," replied Marriott quietly. "A man who is short in his accounts is always ashamed of himself at first; then, when he fears he will be found out, he grows desperate. If he escapes detection for a time, his thoughts turn towards reparation. I'm at the last stage, and that's why I've sent for you gentlemen to meet me here."

"You don't expect us to loan you money, do you?" snapped Mr. Shelton, president of the Egyptian Company. "You know we wouldn't lend anything to a self-confessed thief."

"No, I don't expect to borrow any money," returned Marriott, unabashed by the harsh words. "As I wrote to you, I wish to make a business proposition, that is all."

"Out with it, Marriott," demanded Mr. Washburne, the president of the Arctic Company. "I haven't any time to waste."

"Gentlemen," continued Marriott, drawing three life insurance policies from his pocket, "as I said, I am thirty thousand

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dollars short in my accounts as trustee of various estates. There is no possible way by which I can repay this money unless you agree to my proposition. I might leave town, but, even if I escape capture and extradition, that would not repay the money that has been lost through me."

"You're a cool hand, Marriott, I must confess," remarked Mr. Walker, half-admiringly. "Most men would either cut and run or commit suicide if they were in your fix."

"My proposition is this," continued Marriott, apparently not heeding the interruption: "I hold here, three incontestable policies on my life, one in the Saracen, one in the Egyptian and the third in the Arctic. Each is for twenty thousand dollars. The premiums that have been paid do not make a very large sum and the cash surrender values of these policies would not pay the shortage of which I have spoken."

"Then why have you sent for us?" demanded Mr. Washburne, impatiently. "Your affairs are no concern of ours."

"I have sent for you to offer to turn these policies over to you," replied Marriott calmly, "upon the payment to me of ten thousand dollars for each. That will enable me to make good to those who have been defrauded through me."

"Impossible! You must be crazy!" chorused the three presidents, rising, as if to terminate the interview.

"Be seated, gentlemen," returned Marriott, coolly. "The door is locked and I have the key in my pocket. I haven't finished my proposition yet."

Their faces expressive of mingled anger and astonishment, the three men resumed their seats without a word, their eyes fixed intently upon Marriott.

"My proposition will save you, or rather your companies, ten thousand dollars apiece," continued Marriott, drawing a little bottle from his vest pocket and holding it so that it could be plainly seen. "Two or three drops of this liquid will end my life in as many minutes and your companies will be called upon to pay my executors twenty thousand dollars apiece. That will amount to sixty thousand dollars and will repay the shortage to those who have been wronged through me; the remainder, as I have no heirs, I have directed to be paid over to several charitable

institutions. It is for you to decide, gentlemen. Will you pay the ten or the twenty thousand apiece?"

The presidents drew their chairs close together in whispered consultation.

"The thing is impossible," remarked Mr. Walker, irritably. "Marriott is a fool to expect us to do such a thing."

"It would be a precedent for every rogue in the country to extort money from insurance companies," interposed Mr. Shelton, with conviction. "I, for one, am opposed to any such compromise."

"Better be careful," advised Mr. Washburne, cautiously. "I fully believe Marriott means what he says and I, for one, don't care to witness a suicide."

"I shall give you five minutes to discuss the question, gentlemen," called Marriott, laying his open watch upon the desk. "Then I shall decide for you."

The whispered consultation continued, and at last Mr. Washburne, as spokesman for the three, turned to Marriott.

"Why did you take that money?" he asked, earnestly. "You have always been considered honest and above suspicion, enjoying the confidence of every one."

"The money was taken from me by some one whom I will not name," replied Marriott, wearily. "I placed confidence in one person, who has repaid me by robbing me, not only of all I had but of that which was intrusted to my care. That is all I can say."

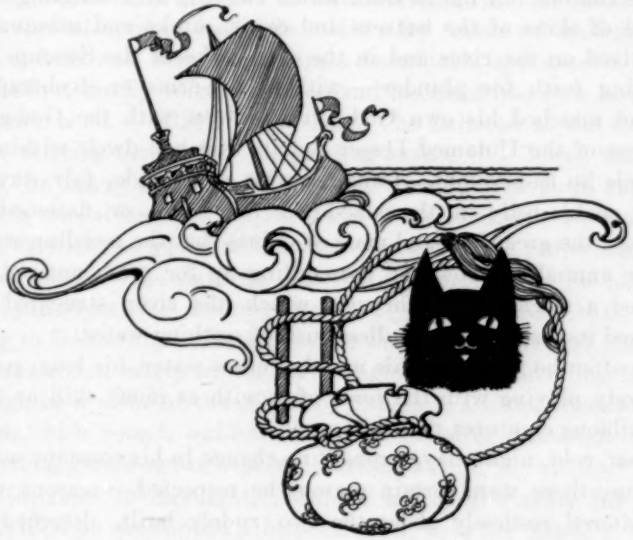
"We may do as you wish," continued Mr. Washburne, more pityingly than sternly, "if you will consent to two conditions. The first is that you will never tell any one that we have bought your policies for such a sum, so far in excess of their value."

"I promise that," replied Marriott, "if you, upon your part, agree not to reveal my defalcation to any one."

"We will keep your secret inviolate," affirmed Mr. Washburne. "The second condition is that you turn over all trust moneys to some one to be appointed by the court. If you agree to that, we will accept your proposition, although we will have to request that we be permitted to oversee the transfer of the trust funds."

"It was my purpose," responded Marriott in the same listless

tone, "in the event of your acceptance of my proposition, to turn over my trusts and never, under any circumstances, be responsible for a dollar of another person's money. If that is all, gentlemen, just sign these agreements to pay ten thousand dollars each when the court appoints a new trustee, and then accompany me to the courthouse to file my petition for release from my trusteeships."



Toad.

BY ROBERT H. LANGFORD.

N that early dawn — dripping with dew on a vegetation that was primeval in its rank luxuriance — there trod, with a stride that was quick and strong and soft of foot, a strange figure up the rough wagon-road that wound and cut its deep-rutted way through the rich, black loam of the Bottom. A figure from which swayed, with dangling tails, a load of skins of the beavers and coons, minks and musquashes that lived on the river and in the cane-brake of the Swamp.

Going forth for plunder — without fire-arms or steel-traps — he had matched his own God-given prowess with the God-given prowess of the Untamed Lesser Spirits that had dwelt within the animals he had caught. Caught in his own crude, fair way, by lying on his belly in the cane-brake for hours, or flattened out amongst the great logs and mass of débris that the receding waters of the annual overflow had been piling up for years until it had formed a mighty dam through which the river struggled and stormed its way with an endless rush of seething water.

As often he floated in this muddy yellow water, his long, powerful body playing with the force of it with as much skill as those amphibious creatures that he sought.

Heat, cold, night, day, wrought no change in his constant search.

True, there were certain seasons he respected — seasons when he loitered restlessly about the two rudely built, detached log cabins where he had been born, and had passed the first year of his life — after that age his whereabouts had speedily become an uncertainty, for he began the exploration of the woods that surrounded the clearing, and had acquired, by his strange habit of squatting, unseen, behind bush or big clump of fern, the name by which he had thereafter been known — Toad.

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Incongruous as it had become, considering the fine development he had attained, the name clung, and if he ever had any other it was forgotten.

As he swung along, with the free, tireless gait of some superb animal, there tore through the bushes ahead of him a huge boar, with snout to earth, spending the volume of its breath in ferocious snorts. Soon other hogs followed — rushing past him with the incredible swiftness that a sure-footed half-wild hog attains. Above their shrill cries he could hear the regular rise and fall of the melodious feeding call. And half a mile farther on he reached a small clearing, where in the midst of the fighting, squealing, brutish mass, there stood a man whose sixty-odd years had not encroached on the strength of his giant frame enough to prevent him bearing aloft on his shoulder an immense sack from which he scattered shelled corn in handfuls. His silky mane of half-matted reddish hair and beard gave him a formidable appearance. But his mellow, kindly voice reassured and his child-like eyes inspired one with trust. "Bill's come, Toad," he hallooed to the distant figure skirting the edge of the jostling swine. "I 'lowed that 'ud make 'im hurry up," he chuckled, as Toad moved more rapidly towards the cabins at the opposite end of the clearing. He stopped at the smaller one and climbing up, by means of the projecting logs at one corner, to the slanting, slab roof, he threw down his load of skins and descended, kicking back the yelping hounds that were trying to follow him. He hurried to the larger cabin and entered the back room, where by the feeble light of an ill-smelling lamp, set high in a niche of the cobwebby chimney, a little, wizened old woman, with round, owl-like eyes, was standing amidst a cloud of burning grease-smoke cooking breakfast.

"Bill come 'fo' day-light, Toad, an' he's been a astin' fur ye," she shrilled as she flipped a hoe-cake over with her hand.

Toad opened a door beside the chimney and entered the front room. He went around to where the light from a small window fell on a bed and its occupant, and leaning over gazed eagerly at the face of the sleeping boy — in repose the face of a child, one that had been sick and wasted somewhat, but that, withal, retained the expressionless beauty of a child.

Under the steady gaze the sleeper stirred and Toad drew back

softly and stood motionless against the wall, as the boy opened his eyes—round owl-like blue eyes that blinked stupidly as they caught the light and then drooped half shut as he rolled over toward the edge of the bed and, sweeping his arm beneath it, drew forth a fat, shiny black valise, opened it, and securing a bottle sucked the contents with slow, noisy gulps. Then he twisted his pillow into a wad and propping his head at a sharp angle dragged his coat down from where it hung on the head of the bed, and ran his hand into the inside pocket—then his chin suddenly collapsed on his chest and his eyes closed.

"Bill, you look mighty bad," observed Toad solemnly, sitting down beside him.

"The blue blazes!" shrieked the startled boy, hastily jerking himself up to a sitting posture, "Who'n hell'r *you* 'n when'd *you* 'light?"

His hand shot under his pillow, and quick as a flash brought a revolver under Toad's nose.

"Why, Bill—I didn't 'low to skeer you, but you *do* look pow'ful bad," Toad said in his monotonous, droll voice, "better take 'nother nap. Ma hain't got breakfus' done nohow."

And as he was speaking he was edging his hands under Bill's elbows in his practised stealthy way. Gripping them suddenly in a muscular clench he folded them back like a jack-knife.

The half-crazy glare died away in Bill's eyes as Toad brought his face closer to him.

He smiled foolishly.

"Thass ole Toad ain' it? W'y, ole Toad, I—I been want'n t'see ye—got t' tell ye—you stuck t' yo' frawg huntin', didn't you—sti'd gallivantin' t' town like me?"

"Bill, I hain't never seed ye this drunk 'fore."

"Thass it, Toad—I was drunk—plum crazy drunk."

For a minute he fell into a dose—he snored—and then he opened his eyes and fixed them on Toad, unseeingly.

"Bill, ever'body said you'd 'a' been 'lected const'ble if you hadn't 'a' went to town," said Toad, slowly.

"Firs' time ever got nuff t' make me drunk, ain' it, Toad?"

"Yes, an' if I'se you I'd stay at home an' git to be const'ble, Bill."

"Ole Toad's got more sense 'n me t' last. He stuck to 'is frawg huntin'—"

All at once he stopped, electrified, and then his dull eyes flashed the keenest intelligence.

"Constable! Good God!"

He bounded out of bed and started toward the door.

"Where's my pistol, fool? Give it here—quick!"

Toad slid around behind the head of the bed and reached the door first.

"I won't let nobody in, Bill—hain't nobody after you 'at I knows of."

The slight frame of the boy convulsed for a minute. Toad flung his arms around him and dragged the door open with his foot.

"Less set here on the step, Bill, fresh air'll he'p ye."

He smoothed the thin dark hair away from the well-shaped forehead of the younger boy as it rested against his brawny shoulder.

"Nobody on God 'mighty's green earth ever cared 's much f' me as you do, ole Toad!" he breathed heavily.

"I allays thought a mighty heap of ye, Bill,—hain't nothin' I wouldn't do fur ye."

"Thass righ'—know it—less go on!"

Bill attempted to rise and staggered out into the yard.

One of the other boys came up from the smaller cabin.

"Bill on a spree?" he asked.

"I'm afraid he's in trouble, Abe—call Pap," answered Toad.

He removed a tin wash basin, and a big cedar water pail from a low shelf beside the cabin and pulled Bill down upon it.

"I 'lowed Bill 'ud be straightened up by now," said the old man, flinging down the empty corn sack as he came around the cabin corner.

"Here, Ma, bring a cup o' good strong coffee for this yap o' yourn!" he bellowed in at the door. Bill's head swayed to one side and the last bit of intelligence faded from his face as they put the coffee to his mouth.

"He's pow'ful sick, Pap," said Toad, "Abe, bring 'is coat 'n' vest, an' I'll put 'is shoes on—heah—now—I 'low we'd better

hide 'im out, Pap, till we find out what's the matter — I never seed Bill do this way 'fo' now."

The old man wrinkled his forehead up comically, and shook his great tawny head doubtfully.

"Bill's too smart to git caught — if he's done anything. He's jis drunk."

"Jis 'bout as drunk as I ever seed a feller," he laughed as he started around to the kitchen.

"Bring nuff grub down to the mink hole on the Bayou, Abe — nuff to las' two, three days," called Toad as he half led, half carried the boy across the clearing.

"Git them hides on top the house an' fetch 'em 'long too," he added, as he disappeared in the deep woods — avoiding the wagon road by which he himself had arrived a short while before.

As the sun rose and penetrated those portions of the Bottom where the road or a clearing lay, the black ooze that had been slightly frozen the night before glistened and steamed under its rays, until it became warm, deep, gluey — rendering travelling well nigh impossible to man or beast unaccustomed to the conditions.

But the thin scum of ice had not melted by twelve o'clock in the thick tangled path through thicket and cane brake, that Toad had chosen.

When he came to the appointed place on the Bayou he found that Abe had already been there and had gone, his own progress having been greatly impeded by the condition of his companion.

Bill sprawled on the pile of skins, while Toad built a fire and prepared a meal. After he had drunk the strong black coffee and devoured the hot corn pone and countless rashers of bacon he took some coffee in a cup and some of the bread and meat and went over to where Bill lay.

"Bill — see here — you're drunker 'an you was 'fo' we started. — I b'lieve somebody's pizened his liquor — you got to drink this coffee and eat somep'n, so you can tell me what you've done — you hear? Bill — tell *me* — so I can git you outen the way. These woods 'ull be full o' Ku Klux 'long 'fo' night — God a'mighty — don't you *know* 'at they will — if you've *done* anything!"

He held the cup to the boy's mouth and he drank, then he broke off a mouthful of bread and tried to put it between his lips.

"I — cain' eat it — 'm sick — lemme get up — quick!"

He sprang to his feet and ran towards the Bayou.

"Better get in here, Toad — in time," he said. And Toad led him into the water.

"Col' water bring you to, some, Bill?" he asked.

"You got 'nuff sense t' take care yo'self, Toad? Go back — lemme 'lone!"

"I hain't agoin', Bill — I'm agoin' to stay right heah with you — if you've *done* anything 'at the Ku Klux 'ull be after you I'll —"

"Good God!" exclaimed the boy, wresting himself loose from his support, and standing erect. His eyes were alert with reason once more.

"I shot Tom Eddy last night in Jim Puryear's saloon — *Tom Eddy,* Toad! You — you —"

He clapped his hand to his head.

"'M sick — knocked out — 's time for you t' go home, ole — ole Toad."

Toad caught up the reeling form and waded out.

"I heard Abe say Tom Eddy hated Bill 'cause Bill had more sense 'n he did — I knowed they put pizen in his liquor!"

He dragged a dugout from under a high bank that was perforated with the burrowings of some small animal. Then he laid a heavy log across the smouldering fire, and throwing the skins into the dugout he placed the unconscious boy thereon, dumped the provisions beside him and pushed the dugout down the Bayou into the Lake, and from thence swimming and guiding it to the river, where they floated down stream about half a mile to the dam — the great, powerful old dam, every log and stick of which Toad was familiar with. He stopped to listen once — backing in the water and going 'round and 'round like a turtle, as he held his head aloft.

"He hain't got much chanst — but what he has got ole Toad 'ull see 'at he gits it!" he said, as the sounds his keen ears brought him assured him that the Bottom was to be the scene of a man hunt.

"Dawgs!" he said stolidly, as he lifted the dugout, burden and all, as easily as another man would have raised a back log for the winter's fire, and swam and crawled and pushed it in turn until it was safely ensconced amidstream, under and half-way up the great heap of débris — high and dry from the rushing waters beneath.

Then he swam back to the Bayou and went to work — cautiously — silently — like a Beaver at the hastily constructed and long neglected levees.

"I'll wash them dawgs back long 'fo' they git this fur," he said as he began, with marvellous patience and persistency, the work of demolishing the levee in the weakest places.

And slowly and surely it gave way before his efforts, as he swam up an down, up and down as the hours sped by, diving quickly as the slightest noise came to his trained ears. Until at last — it seemed simultaneous almost, the black stagnant water began to seep and trickle and force its way with tiny shoots and then — with a rush and a sickening lap — lap — lap it flew outward and onward, carrying everything before it for a mile inland.

Then he swam back to the dam and rested until dark came on, then he swung the dugout from its rude nest down into the water and towed it out midstream.

"Guess I'd better not wake 'im," he said, "Maybe if he sleeps all night he'll wake up in 'is right mind — and then Bill can take keer of his se'f. By daylight he'll be fur nuff down river to be outen danger, an' he can sell them hides fur money to git fu'ther — He'll know 'at 'ole Toad' took keer of 'im!"

He gave the dugout a push and the swift rush of water from the dam sped it true as an arrow on its way down stream.

Then he swam beyond the dam to Milburn's Bridge which was the termination of the miles of corduroy road that wound through the Bottom. As darkness settled — the thick, almost stifling darkness of the swamp — the counterfeit call of Bird and Lesser Beast sounded afar through the great Marsh and he crouched lower and lower in his own hiding place above the dam, the tumultuous beating of his own wild heart stifled by the sound of the rushing water about him.

Then as the night passed the slow moving thud of the feet of

many horses, coming in the distance over the corduroy road, reached his trained ears. Silently they came — a dread silence — ominous — fearful ! And moving through the spongy swale of the vast bog there flickered an instant, and were out, myriad lights, like jack-o'-lanterns, but which the man in the water knew were converging toward one spot — the Bridge !

"Up and down the river — again — through the swamp and cane-brake, to the house — again — until we have what we seek !"

He knew that order as well as if it had been whispered in *his* ear — knew the untiring relentless Power behind it — knew what it meant to the drifting sleeper in the dugout.

His slow brain moved in travail — agonizing — awful — and then was born a fierce resolution! An owl hooted dismally from a tree near the river bank and was answered by the mournful cry of a whip-poor-will far out across the Lake, as the meeting by the Bridge terminated and the scouts separated.

Springing up suddenly — and being lost as suddenly to view — above him — walking out on the drift-wood of the dam he caught sight of a hideous form and a terrible masked face — and moving out on the Bridge a formless gray rider going across to the other side — and another — and another — until his heart fainted with fear and his brain ceased to grapple with what he faced.

Then — a wet arm covered with slime — lacerated, bloody, shot up from beneath the water, and with the pistol report — Bill's pistol that he had forgotten to return — the foremost rider fell backward — and the horse shot forward at a breakneck speed. Instantly a hundred shots were fired into the débris of the dam — and then there was silence. For an hour there was silence.

The crack of twig, a stumble, alone telling of the exploration being carried out. Finally there was another shot from Bill's revolver and a heavy body splashed off the dam into the water !

Above — below — into the dam more than a hundred shots were fired this time.

And then, crawling into the brush close to the bank and pulling himself up to what had been one of his old watch-towers, the desperate man tested his last chance of escape. He took a match from the water-proof box he always carried and ignited the tinder-like débris in one place, and then repeated the operation farther